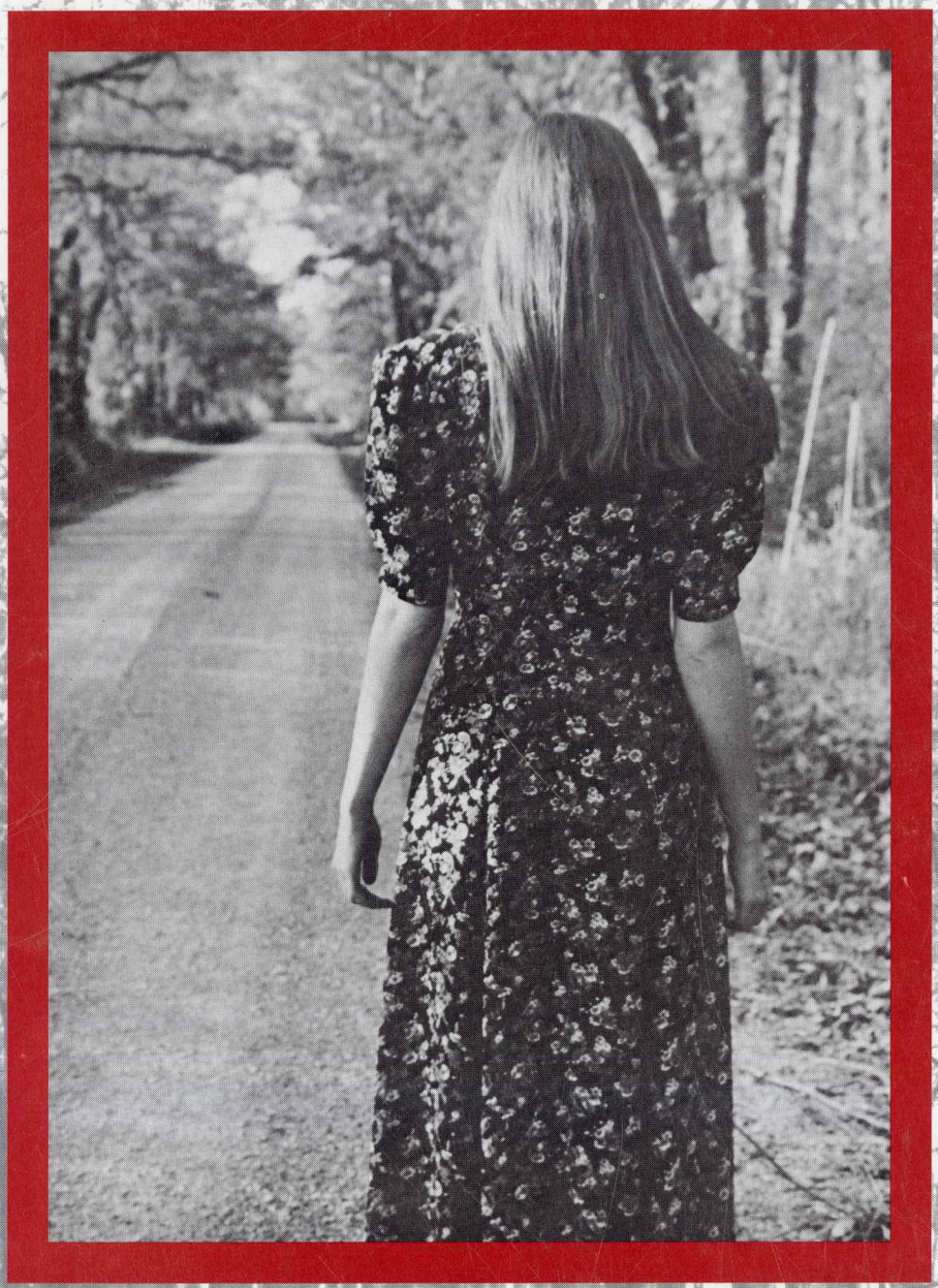

The Tower
1994

The Tower 1994

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From the editor...

Even after four years as a student here, I continue to be amazed by the amount of creative talent on the University of Montevallo campus. The *Tower 1994* is an effort to showcase some of that talent. The creative works found within these pages reflect the diverse thoughts and feelings of our student body, ranging from the simply beautiful to the harshly real. I hope that you may find an appreciation for them all.

This publication is the culmination of many months of work, and I must pledge my undying gratitude to those who helped me through it in whatever way, big or small. So Rob Collins, Earline Howell, Cynthia Shackelford, Joseph Holmes, Tiffany Agerton, Steve Kelley, and members of my staff — thank you. And to Mark Moore and Matt Orton, an especially heartfelt thanks. Without you all, my sanity may have escaped me long ago.

Sherri R. Phillips
Editor, *Tower 1994*

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Background: Stephen D. Kelley Jr.

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Amy Baker

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Opening and closing quotes from T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"

Datta

Dayadhvam

Damyata

environment

the bird I make is human
whereas before were wings,
now Earth beckons
and I, in realization …
that Life offers more
when there simply is no more worry of Religion …
see me on the ground
see me in trees
see me in the new church
(an entire Planet that beckons,
round and full)
see me looking at what should be looked at
hearing what should be heard
knowing what should be known.

pc wilm

Nine a.m. Suburbia

shuttlebus and it's nine a.m.
and i'm sitting all alone
no rain to speak of, no gentle snow
out of work and listening to your song —

out here in Paper America
with the textiles and the labor force
wet indians and merchant slaves
dance in fields and in houses of plenty —

mama's boys down the street
lick the milk from their chins
they smile for the camera
and rape the girl next door on the back porch —

television wars and big box dreams
it's nine a.m.
the dog is dead
and i have no place to be.

Keysha D. Garrison

We walked along the filthy streets
of the city's south side
among the night-pigeons and
street-rats of the fountain —
Listened to an old ex-hippie
self-proclaimed Christian occult expert
bitch about the pagan sculptures in the city
and the swastikas in the lobby-tile of the old
Gothic building down the street
And we listened to the stories of the
cretinous bulky muscle-bound jocks
throwing pizzas at the fags in the park and
trying to rape the lesbians
And watched a Nazi skin strutting in a
T-shirt that read "White Reich —
Alabama" and we wondered
if White Reich was near Silver Hill
And I think about all the hate in the world
And I'm afraid that the hate disguised as kindness
will kill us all quicker
than the young boys in boots and braces
out to kill all the Jews and fags

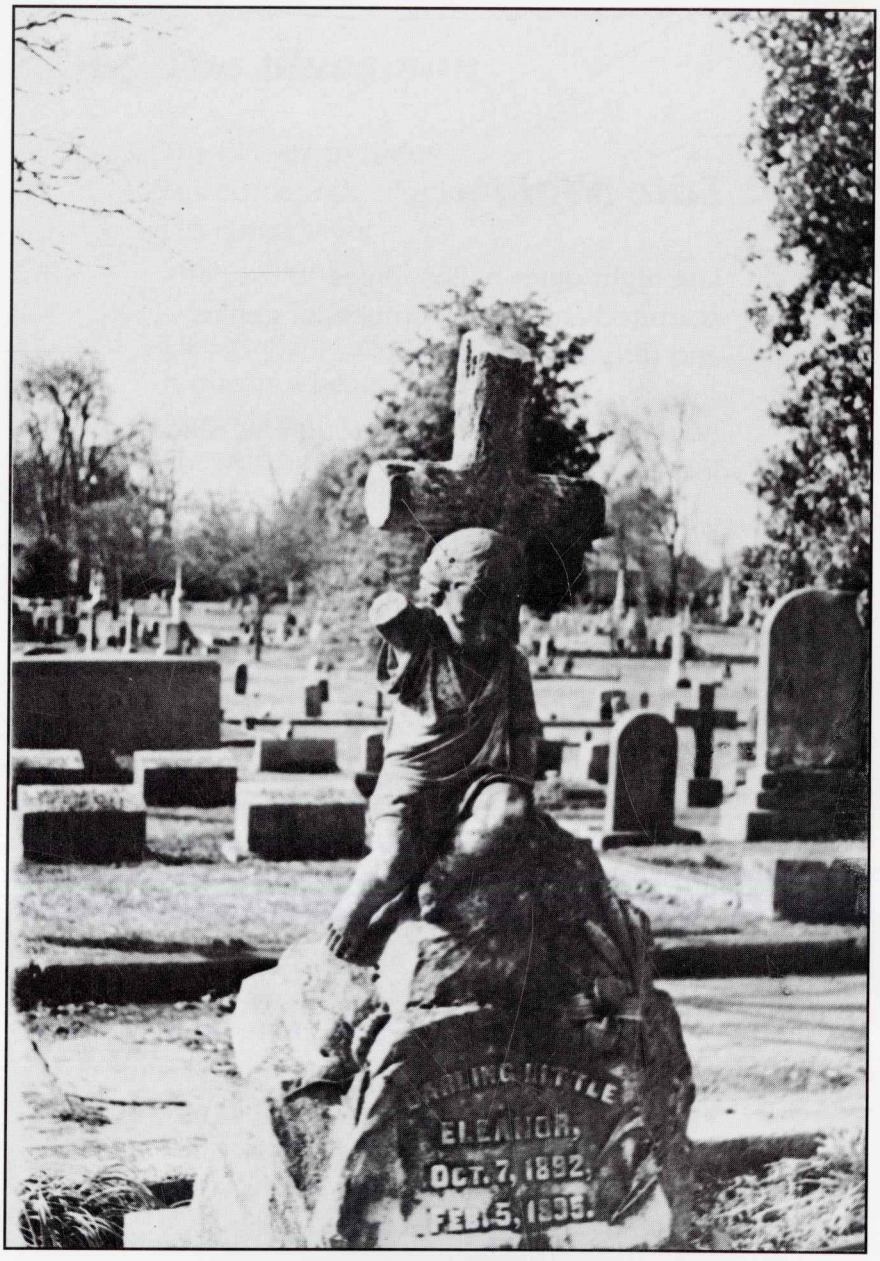
Karma de Gruy

A Bleeding Man

All the missed showers
Have stained my clothing,
Myriad cigarettes
Have blackened my lungs,
The drugs and diversions
Have twisted my thoughts,
The heartbreak and loss
Have hardened my heart,
The sickness and evil
Have tainted my soul,
The fairy tales and false dreams
Have clouded my vision,
The thoughtless rumors and vicious lies
Have encased my hearing,
The stabs in the back and slaps in the face
Have turned my head and
Listen …

It's so easy to let a bleeding man die.

Jonathan Wood



Skie Whitcomb
Eleanor's Tears

Late Night

late night diner philosophies
scattered among the embers of genius
and dirty napkin dreams —

he runs a nervous hand through his mane,
lets his cigarette dangle;

his thoughts slip into a coffee cup
and she smiles to finish his sentence,
it's three a.m. and ancient mind grids
are locking again until he can find
himself a prophecy —

she's tired of over-cooked food for thought,
she wishes he would sleep;

late night diner philosophies are forgotten
when the dawn is wild.

Keysha D. Garrison

The Bluesman

The bluesman slides
His bottleneck effortlessly down
His faded silver
Steel guitar

Like stroking a young girl
It makes a beautiful noise
Much like the woman that
He worships like a goddess

The words fall off his
Lips and through the air
Like rushing down a fall
Every drop hitting harder than the last

Anger, loss, despair
Are the things he knows best
But his wicked smile shows
He wouldn't have it any other way

Bluesman show me
The secret of your smile
Show me how to feel joy
Through the despair

The bluesman just strokes
His makeshift woman
Without a word he makes it whine
And with a smile, shows me the way

Loyd McIntosh

Felicity Zoe

Laughter in her eyes,
and in her Aspect,
and a whole summer
of warm-drowsy days
in her Sigh, she moves
through unheard music,
the slightest Nuance
of her Form singing
a harmony of liquid rhythm and
supple Purpose, as
softly she steals before him, to favor
her Love a secret
Smile, the morning sun's first rays upon the
heather's crystal dew.

Christopher J. Parker

garden

I plant your face
next to the stars

surprised, falling down drunk
you were, onto the kitchen tiles
only half-awake,
Love

no bleeding
but
that is what I love about you
no bleeding …
and yet, thoughts of blood

I take you as a crop
I put you in rows
I prepare you with … hoes
ready?

you are not expecting
not an inkling of beds
only distant saxophones
to speckle the sky
and its audible streaks, Love

I plant your face …
the rest grows.

pc wilm

Abby Gorum

Ageless

That girl. I mean that Woman.
Oh, she can twist her tongue and spit out a jumble of words,
Gather them up, and stitch a southern song together
Like a brightly patched quilt.

She looks just like a child—
Not quite a girl or boy,
Stuck at that stage of innocent androgyny.
She looks as if she's playing dress-up:
Old-lady dress and loose, shaky-big shoes.

It's so hard to believe that
She's a mother,
Married and all
'Cause she looks like she is only playing house,
Pretending to stir something
In that huge pot on her stove,
Not really spooning steamy cabbage soup for supper.

But she really is a grown-up woman.
Her voice is proof.
Her soul is proof.
Her hands tell me this too,
With slender fingers,
Palms creased with crazy lines,
Veiny wrists and
Crude, square joints.

She chain-smokes and drinks lots of pure, black coffee.
She rocks in her grandma-chair.

Motherhood is natural for her.
Damn. She is a sage.

But, when I close my eyes and
Speak her name,
I see her in my mind
The way I saw her for the first time.
Stomping, dancing in her strong way,
Closing long-lashed eyes,
Opening her mouth to a great big O
And hollerin' out an Alabama story
Or crooning like Billie Holiday.

Veronica E. Kyle

Butler County Breakdown

Morning sun roared,
and I stared at the rags of my rubber black
littering the red shoulder
"And Adam lived an hundred and
thirty years, and begat *a son…*"
The radio preached a drawl like the
languid shimmer I pursued — and the aged
engine amened under
the once-white hood
"I am to be gathered unto my
people…"

so I sought help
down a path, twin canals of dust
racing each other into the green of

Blackberry brambles —
Crickets marked time as
I ate the fruitmeat, burning
with the day
Arches and sworls colored
from the ink that juiced my fingertips …

Weeping in the path,
A naked child, dark with Alabama
dust and the blood of Africa,
Wounding with a stare that
bled blackberry juice

Behind him in a field,
Blackened timbers stained the green

That night, safe between the sheets
I burned with a dream
The roof crashed, fiery eyes
Spewed into the darkness
and a weep, the preacher's drawl or mine,
chanted

Ashes of a Negro shack…begat
dust

Kingman Cody Shelburne

Slavery (A vision of victimization)

Whenever it is triggered, my thought of slavery,
I think of it as …

some terrible force — one that presses
its victims against one of the
four walls in a little box room

This room has a light, but no light switch
And it is on the day when a switch is
installed that the last bulb blows …

This room has a window, but its panes are
painted black
And it is on the day when the victim finally
scrapes the paint away that he becomes
blind.

Kambria White

The Renewal

Big, strong, heavy hands
Scraped and tired from their manual labor
Dirty, mean old tired man
Mad and violent due to uncontrollable
circumstances
Brown, starry staring eyes
Scaring the caring away and welcoming
vultures
Nose so well proportioned and clean
Free of the blow so white and pure
Ears which hear so well the haunting
screams of a mother so sweet and undeserving
Mouth of undying thirst
Dry and speechless

Come touch — feel your hands
Forever soft and light
Recall the laughter
Stare through me and begin to cry
Smell my scent and breathe the cleanliness
Hear my prayers
Kiss golden brown skin
Taste the sweet —

Spit out the sour pain!

Kambria White

Romantic Things

Live with the pain.

But it's true: she's so …
Rapturous.

… soon, the words had no

meaning.

Reflections and romantic
things
Can be so hauntingly

Deceiving.

Jonathan Wood

Sonnet I

I thought I saw her last night in a dream;
Whether my Angel once past, or to be,
I cannot say, or perhaps pure fancy,
For such was her nature. And it did seem
That there was nothing could disrupt the beam
Betwixt our lock'd eyes, as she spoke to me
In soft tones lilting with such melody,
That her words passed her lips like folded cream.
We were so comfortable together
That we appeared quite nat'ral engagd thus
Quietly away the hours whiling;
Never aware the illusion for us
Was time itself, not cupid's favor:
For just as we kisst did my alarm ring.

Christopher J. Parker

Reflection in Water, Rippled

On one June oven morn
I disturbed the pond's
Inertia with a pebble
Plucked from the dust-pack
Bank. Nonplussed,
Unswift algae pulsed
Circle greens and other
Nameless geometries
Of liquid motion,
Where shimmers
Cavorted like children.
And I saw my body:
Flat, wavering,
Angled askance and
Grotesque like it was
Drunk on sunlight and
Pond water …
A collage of perspectives
I wasn't meant to see.
With bent brow
I realized my error, for
The mirror of nature had
Revealed my image
Upon the infinite eye
Of the world.

Kingman Cody Shelburne

Leanne DeHaven

#7

PART I

talking, while pissing on the floor,
writing songs — more important things.
food, money — he don't care about that.
$900 rent — paid.
shit there, pay rent.
put up with fucking susan.
Ha! enjoy! shower.

she & dad don't talk;
they ignore one another.
Insults? non-existence.
making him give in
made you a rock — who won? no one.

cold hearted bastard
won't let up.
research it if he must; anything to win.
Quite commendable,
'cool,' admirable,
learning for the sake of besting.
competition,
mind games, twisters,
crypto shit, addition problems w/ 10 digits.
like military code bullshit.

God — you're hurting me,
but it's kinda cool.

PART II

He's obsessed:
diet coke, going to store, working,
a caffeine fix, bookshelves.
by twelve they are going bad
Already going
already going Bad.

PART III

Fuck that shit.
i saw the civil rights thing,
i got that … great.
look at the hate in their faces.
look at the pigs, look at the kkk,
boyscout beware.
the engine roars loud,
the cop's sirens louder,
the ambulance too.
in the backroom they
escape the pen that
tells
  tells…
    their words are lost.

PART IV

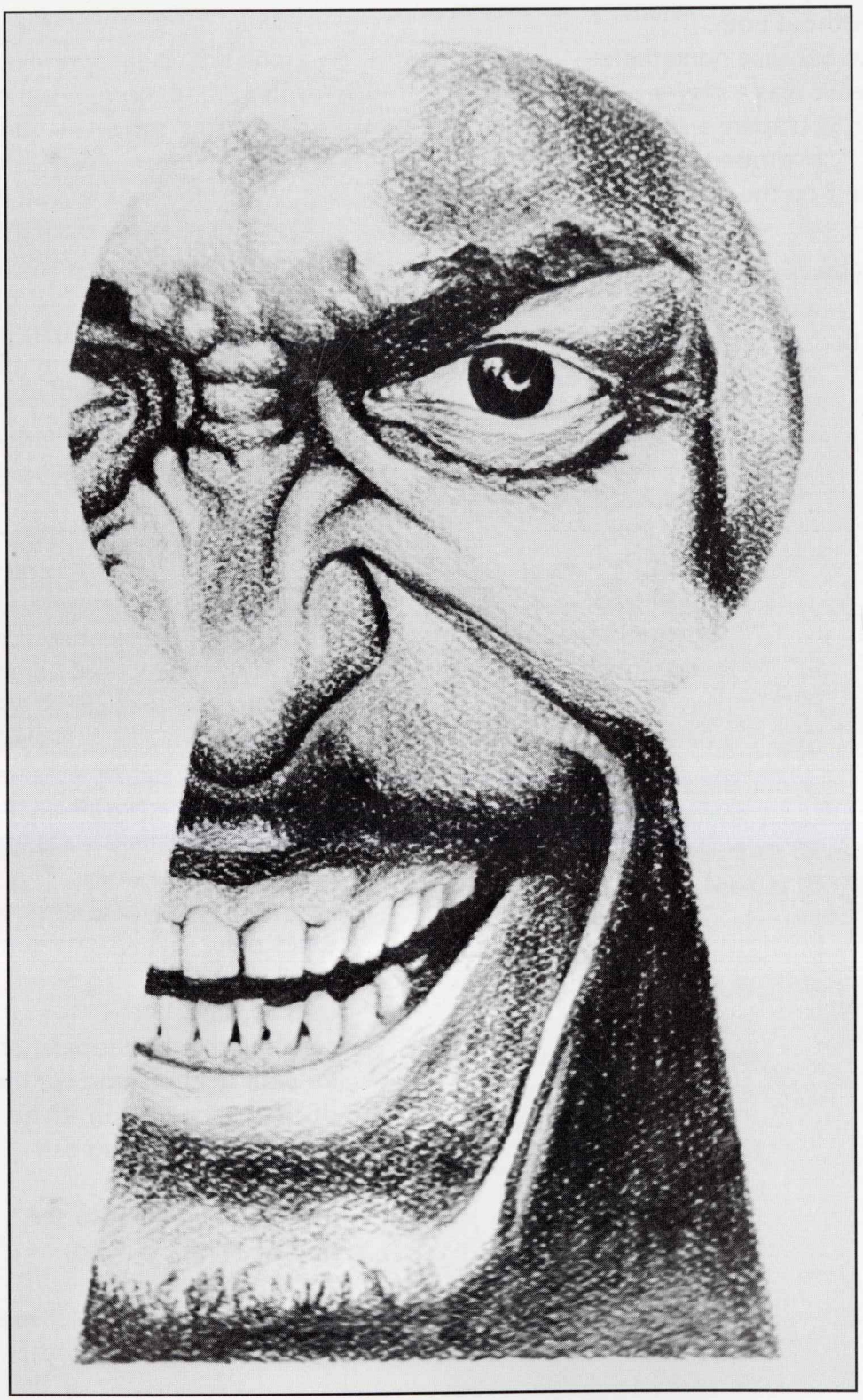
Thoughts as pen
written without both.
Lost none because none there.
Shakespeare was a player …
friend can you spare a stage.
Kerouac … overrated …
sorta bored on the road.

lost last
last lost
the same
the some
some lost.
some last.
same lost.
all last.
all lose.
they need the money, man …
and All walk on by.

PART V

Lost Last — no big deal.
fuck the liners,
fuck the empty words.
forgotten lyrics, senseless
tunes only.
tombs only.
cold as i am,
consider me the preparation
for your death. some eat their
dead … i'll bury you alive.
you stink like a dead cat,
and look,
look! look! nothing to see.
got meaning? fuck no.
got reason? hell no.
why — for nothing — it seemed
important to kill each other.

g. lungchunk



Abby Gorum

Elizabeth Mullins

I met him following the Dead
he asked for some of my beans
But I didn't want to offer them cold
The fire was going out
I had no water to wash out the pan
And the last rain was dripping from the trees
the wind blew wet leaves at me
Pushing us into the shelter of my tent
"I'm wandering, finding myself," I said
And he kissed me
We wandered, following the Dead together
and I gave myself to him
Now, I have his child, Casey Jones.
He's gone, and I have to listen to the Dead on my stereo.

Ashley McDuff

Tabby Stealth

Grey and White
Tabby Stealth,
Hurtling with speed and Orange Fire
in Calico Fits
of Rage
and Delight,
and occasionally off'ring
a tiny white chin,
or cinnamon nose
to be loved;
and biting the hell out of
unsuspecting toes.

Christopher J. Parker

Child —
dreamer with the sun
held gently in cupped hands,
bringing the moonlight water
to her soft lips,
kissing it and releasing it to freedom.
Smile
like shattered clouds over a
twilight autumn sun
that slowly fades to
silent, beautiful blue.
Laugh
like crystal that breaks light
into a million shards of beauty
which turn into water
which turns into music
becoming light again.
Child-dreamer
my child
my dreamer
lighting my way out of this darkness
i love her
my child-dreamer.

Skie Whitcomb

Shaky Walls

The answering machine light was blinking through the darkness, welcoming Caitlin home from an exhausting day. After listening to his voice and feeling a bit silly, Caitlin hit the play button again just to let those deep octaves wash over her once more. Glancing at her clock radio, she realized that he was already on his way. And then, alone in the darkness, one pure, unadulterated smile slowly graced Caitlin's face.

Recognizing the fact that his transfer had become final last week, and with only six weeks before leaving, he just couldn't help but be drawn to Caitlin. He wanted to know everything about her. When he was with her at times it was impossible to leave. He knew Caitlin was different than any other woman he had ever met, but he had prayed she wasn't too different.

Hours later, lying there in his arms, Caitlin felt the walls slipping. With her long, strawberry blonde hair fanned out across the pillow that had been discarded in favor of those very arms, the mandatory discussion every new pair of lovers must endure began. Still encircled in the ex-football player's body that she had already become addicted to, Caitlin turned her freckled back to him because it was much easier for her not to have to look him in the eyes when she lied. The eyes that she was sure would see through to her very being. She had to be careful. And quietly, the two young lovers started the conversation of loves lost, souls taken, and hearts broken.

"What was your very first broken heart like? And when was it?" was the first searching question he asked.

Caitlin thought to herself, "Is he nuts? What does he expect? For me to just pour my heart and soul out after such a short time?" That was exactly what he expected because his soul was an open book.

"Well, mine isn't."

"You tell me about yours and I'll tell you about mine" was Caitlin's response to his intentional invasion. As he began the musings of his first broken heart, Caitlin couldn't help but think of hers, silent and to herself. Her first real broken heart was not by the hands of some college boyfriend, but by a woman and as a child.

It was a typical Saturday in Caitlin's first-grade life. Alex, her older brother, and Caitlin had gotten up at the crack of dawn just in time to fix two over-flowing bowls of Captain Crunch before the Super Heroes came on. As the roofs of their mouths began to numb, the two children became lost in Metropolis, questioning how Wonder Woman's plane could be invisible if they could see its outline. Engrossed, Caitlin had forgotten that her mother worked on Saturdays. Caitlin's mamma bustled around drinking coffee and taking that last hot roller out of her hair when Caitlin suddenly realized that her mamma was leaving. See, Caitlin's

mother worked at a grocery store and had questionable hours to an impressionable six-year-old. Caitlin remembered thinking, "I'm away from her all week at school; Saturdays are supposed to be for us. Why doesn't she want to be with us?"

Caitlin's mamma started edging for the door aware of the ensuing scenario. She leaned down to Caitlin's outstretched arms and kissed her forehead, all the while whispering, "Mamma's got to go to work. I love you and I will be back soon." Back then a whole day without her felt like an eternity to Caitlin. "If she really loved me, she wouldn't leave me," were the thoughts of a little girl that no longer exists.

Caitlin followed her mother out to a front yard filled with trees she would someday climb and consequently fall from. Wearing her Winnie the Pooh footed pajamas that made those neat sounds across the linoleum in the kitchen, Caitlin had forgotten the wonderful world of cartoons, for no one could compare to her mamma. She recalled the '78 cream, two-door Buick in their front yard that her mamma slid into, carrying with her Caitlin's longing to be in it alongside her. And as the tears began to stream down her tiny red face, Caitlin's father, with his 40-hour-a-week job, came out to run interception between the two of them.

Caitlin became rooted there stoically, unmovable and inconsolable. The first signs of emotional walls began to go up as Caitlin's father asked, "What's wrong? Are you O.K.?" On the inside, Caitlin screamed, "What's wrong with me? Why won't mamma stay with me? What did I do? Why doesn't she love me? How could she leave me here? Why won't she take me with her? Why aren't you the one leaving instead of her? You're never here anyway." But through the uncontrollable gasping that comes with the crying of a child, she mumbled, "Nothing."

Aggravated, Caitlin's father stomped off with those heavy steel-toed boots that she had always hated. Standing there shattered and devastated for what seemed like forever, Caitlin prayed that her mamma would turn the car around and drive back to her. But she never did.

Looking back now, Caitlin wonders if her mother remembers those Saturday mornings with her daughter standing there crying as she backed out the driveway. And Caitlin also wonders if her mother, too, had a broken heart.

As his heart-breaking story came to an end, he gently asked, "Well, what about you?"

Caitlin lay there and momentarily considered letting the walls down. But in an instant she decided to pretend she was asleep.

Tiffany Shockley

Respite

Sitting on the road near Oaken Highway,
Sun warming my pants, and through them, my thighs.
The desert is so lovely, so peaceful and smooth …

Until dusk falls,
When the air chills and the wind bites
And the land no longer wants anyone around.
Night can do that.

The motel neons and cheap air conditioners
Are all too familiar and even more agreeable,
Box bed and a staring, lonely television …

Sleep is a sweet escape,
The shifting of worlds and realities,
Consciousness and senses converted and satiated.
Then there is another awakening.

Morning comes stale and flat,
But the sun sings a dear "hello, again,"
And roads lead forward …

Jonathan Wood

La Mode d'Heure

The sun blinks its sleep-swollen eyes.
In fractured unison, doors open.
Onto front porches, They emerge from silent houses.
Silent, They speak no words.

Gowns. Housecoats. Pincurled-fingerwaved heads bow to
retrieve milk bottles and morning papers,
then shuffle back into the silence on slippered feet.

Midmorning. Front-porch hives buzz;
each with its own Queen Bee.
They pinch leaves off geraniums and fertilize with tea
leaves.

Starched aprons and cotton dresses are *la mode d'heure.*
Coiffeures are four-o'clock dreams made real by bobby-pins
and hair-nets.

An occasional "good morning" is respectable at this hour.
They nod and observe each other across clipped lawns and
barbered hedges.

Soon They disappear. While the sun plays hide-and-seek among
the clouds, They exact perfection with rub-board, dust-cloth
and frying-pan.

They take down Their hair.
They powder Their noses.
The scent of Evening in Paris mingles with the aroma of fried
chicken. The events of the day pass inspection.

Dust settles under wheels as cars stop.
Children squeal with delight.
Men shake hands and spit in the dirt.
Women hug and admire home-made dresses.

They stand open-armed.
Front porches are covered with the feet of families, looking
for a place under a kitchen table.

Silence weighs heavy.
Front-porch rocking chairs hold out arms like yester-year
lovers.
They sit, in the dark, caressing the time-worn oak, thinking
Their time-worn thoughts. The rockers gently rock in the
time-worn, front-porch grooves.

The moon nods its sleepy head.

Kayren Owens

Circle

The embers glow in
fiery dying, ashwood stirred
and resurrected.
Fire can tell the future
it can tell a story
it can define a lie
Look deep, children
where the fire burns blue
and there is water.
Do you see the circle
the cycle of you
I preach judas crucified
christ suicide
with no hope of redemption
except upon this rainbowed
opiate mountain

I remember
— you do, do you? —
when I was a child
— define child —
when I knew how to fly
— and you still can, yes you can
spread those wings, baby, spread those thighs
and i'll make you fly so fast and so high
you'll never want to come down —
Down
keep it down shove it down
because sex is bad and drugs are bad
why becauseisayso
and love is bad and peace is bad
and i am bad and a mistake
and is this really worth it

See the circle, children
see the light within the gaping eyes
let it inside to where
the garden grows
that beautiful garden of your own devising
do not deny yourself the water
the baptism of bloody tears
let yourself go
let yourself grow
join me

The child died today.
Tiny fledgling who didn't know yet
how to fly,
your wings crushed before you had a chance
to use them.
Earthbound as i am,
you will never turn cartwheels with the angels.

Touch it
the ember where it glows brightest
it holds the light inside it
is there light inside it
or do i want there to be light inside it
It makes no difference
Apathy is my communion blood
i want the light and i will have it
one way or another
clutch the ember tight

Beware the greedy, grasping hands below
before they wring your heart
like they shattered your wings
and split wide your soul

Welcome
it's about time you understood
Crack the ember
let the circle fall inside your mouth
and burn your tongue
like incense ash
it will explode you
so we can really see what is inside you
Welcome to heaven
where the ravens dance
and nobody really gives a fuck

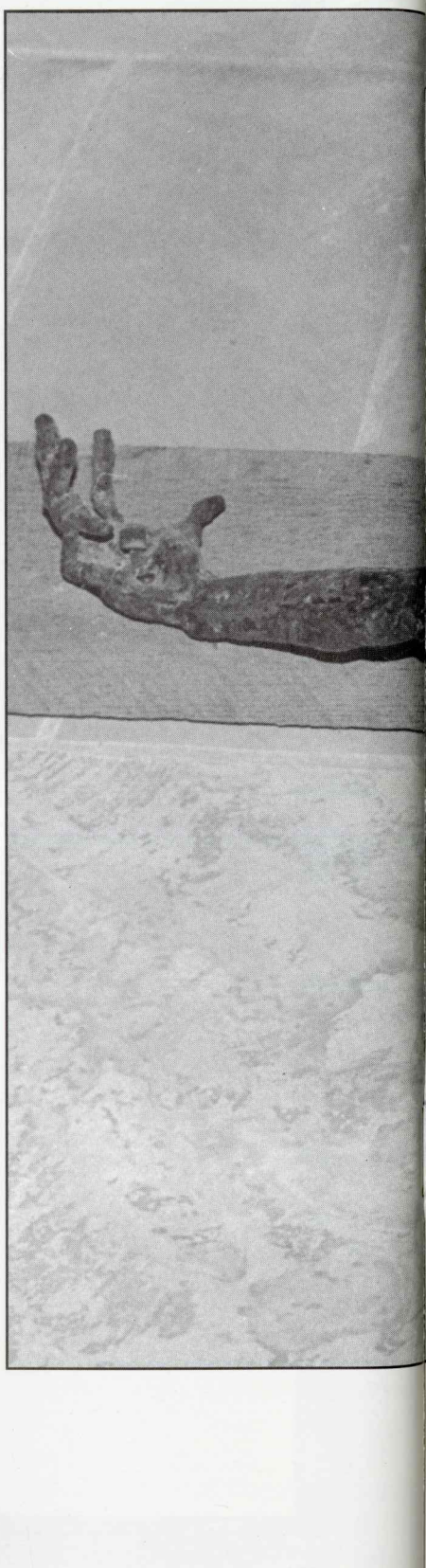
I teach the cycle broken
the circle with an end
and when you die, there is no resurrection

Skie Whitcomb

Shantih

Shantih

Shantih



Skie Whitcomb